

Merkel, Hollande Seek Unified Response to Migrant Crisis

BERLIN - The leaders of Germany and France will meet in Berlin on Monday to seek a unified stance on efforts to tackle the biggest migrant crisis since World War II, as hundreds more people poured into Serbia in a desperate bid for a better life.

At least 2,000 more migrants entered Serbia overnight from Macedonia, which has declared a state of emergency over the massive numbers pressing into the country from the Greek border.

They are trying to reach Hungary, a member of the EU's



open-border Schengen agreement, which has already registered over

100,000 asylum seekers this year and plans to finish its anti-migrant fence

on the Serbian border by the end of August. Hours ahead of the talks

with French President Francois Hollande, German Chancellor An-

gela Merkel condemned "vile" violent protests against refugees, as anti-migrant sentiment reared its head over the weekend in the eastern city of Heidenau. "The chancellor and the entire government condemn the violent rampages and the aggressively xenophobic atmosphere in the strongest terms,"

Merkel's spokesman Steffen Seibert told reporters after the clashes between police and far-right thugs protesting the opening of a new centre for refugees. (AFP)

Almost 80,000 Sign UK Petition for Netanyahu Arrest

LONDON - Almost 80,000 people had by Monday signed a petition urging the arrest of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for war crimes when he visits London next month. Israel Misses Gas-Wealth Opportunities The Wall Street Journal The petition was launched earlier this month by British citizen Damian Moran and is posted on the government's website. "Under international law he (Netanyahu) should be arrested for war crimes upon arrival in the UK for the massacre of over 2,000

civilians in 2014," Moran said, referring to the 51-day offensive by Israeli forces in Gaza last year. If the number of signatories reaches 100,000, the petition can be considered for debate in Britain's parliament. But Moran told media he doubted it would reach the chamber given the close relationship between Israel and Britain. The British government was obliged to respond after the document received 10,000 signatories, saying that "visiting heads of foreign governments. (AFP)

U.S. Signals it Wants to Mend Ties: Lavrov

MOSCOW - Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Monday the United States has been sending "signals" that it wants to start mending ties with Moscow, badly strained over the past year and a half by the conflict in Ukraine. The United States and European Union slapped economic sanctions on Russia last year after its annexation of Ukraine's Crimean peninsula and support for a separatist rebellion in eastern Ukraine. Moscow, which denies arming the rebels, responded with its own counter-sanctions against Western countries.



But Russia and the United States have still cooperated in some other areas, notably in helping to broker a landmark nuclear deal last month with Iran. Lavrov made clear Moscow was

open to further dialogue, though it would also not "beg" for better ties. "But if we receive a proposal to start, even gradually, restoring these channels, mechanisms for dialogue

and cooperation that have been frozen by our American partners, I am sure ... we will agree to restore these channels," he said. "We are already getting ... (More on P4)...(23)

Ukraine Vows to Increase Troops to Fend off Rebel Attacks

KIEV - Ukraine's president vowed to increase troop numbers to fend off attacks by Russia-backed separatist rebels and warned his countrymen that there is still the threat of a "large-scale invasion," in an impassioned speech to mark Independence Day on Monday. Speaking during a military parade, President Petro Poroshenko said Ukraine must not be complacent even though hostilities have largely died down. In a show of force, thousands of Ukrainian servicemen marched in downtown Kiev on to mark the country's independence from the Soviet Union on Aug. 24, 1991. "We stand for peace, but we are not pacifists," Poroshenko

said. "We must get through the 25th year of independence as if on brittle ice. We must understand that the smallest misstep could be fatal. The war for independence is still ongoing." Poroshenko didn't say how many more troops he would send to eastern Ukraine. He claimed that Russia had massed about 50,000

troops on the border with Ukraine and had supplied the rebels with about 500 tanks and 400 pieces of artillery. Poroshenko warned that Russia is wary of an outright invasion and is instead developing another strategy: sow discord across all of Ukraine and thus spoil its relations with its Western allies. (AP)

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UN Tribunal Orders India to Suspend Case Against Italians



BERLIN - A U.N.-mandated tribunal on Monday ordered India to put on hold legal proceedings against two Italian marines accused of killing two Indian fishermen in 2012 until an arbitration panel has ruled on the dispute. However, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea in Hamburg didn't act on Rome's request to order the release of one of the marines, who is still held in India. Massimiliano Latorre and Salvatore Gironi were assigned to anti-piracy duty aboard an Italian oil tanker off India's coast at the time of the shootings. Italy argues the shooting occurred in international waters, that the fishermen were mistaken for pirates and that the case should be heard in an Italian court. New Delhi insists it has jurisdiction and wants to charge both sergeants with murder. The men had to stay in India without formal charges but were allowed to return temporarily to Italy to vote in 2013 elections. Latorre was allowed to travel home for medical treatment in September after suffering a stroke and is still in Italy, while Gironi remains in India. Rome took the case to international arbitration in June. "Italy and India shall both suspend all court proceedings and shall refrain from initiating new ones which might aggravate or extend the dispute," the Hamburg, Germany-based U.N. tribunal said in its 15-6 majority ruling. (AP)

U.S., Turkey to Launch 'Comprehensive' Anti-Islamic State Operation



ANKARA - Turkey and the United States will soon launch "comprehensive" air operations to flush Islamic State fighters from a zone in northern Syria bordering Turkey, Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu told Reuters on Monday. Detailed talks between Washington and Ankara on the plans were completed on Sunday, and regional allies including Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Jordan, as well as Britain and France may also take part, Cavusoglu said in an interview. "The technical talks have been concluded, yesterday, and soon we will start this operation, comprehensive operations, against Daesh (Islamic State)," he said. The United States and Turkey plan to provide air cover for what Washington judges

to be moderate Syrian rebels as part of the operations, which aim to flush Islamic State from a rectangle of border territory roughly 80 km (50 miles) long, officials familiar with the plans have said. Diplomats say cutting Islamic State's access to the Turkish border, across which it has been able to bring foreign fighters and supplies, could be a game-changer. U.S. jets have already begun air strikes from Turkish bases in advance of the campaign. Cavusoglu said the operations would also send a message to President Bashar al-Assad and help put pressure on his administration to come to the negotiating table and seek a political solution for Syria's wider war. (Reuters)

Neighbour News

Nuclear Deal Fosters Better Ties: Rouhani

TEHRAN - Iran's President Hassan Rouhani said Monday that world powers will eventually look back at last month's nuclear deal as a wise precursor to better relations with the Islamic republic. His remarks came in a meeting with Britain's Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond, who is on the second and final day of a trip to Tehran. British and Iranian embassies reopened in Tehran and London on Sunday, the latest step in ending a diplomatic chill stemming from the nuclear crisis and Western-led sanctions against Iran. The nuclear deal - which will see those sanctions lifted in exchange a new inspections regime and curbs on Iran's atomic

programme - is due to be implemented in the next few months. "The negotiating parties will realise in the future that interaction rather than confrontation with Iran was the right approach," the official IRNA news agency quoted Rouhani as saying. "We consider this agreement as the start of a move toward creating a better situation in international and regional relations." Hammond said Sunday that recent strife between Britain and Iran - a hard-line mob trashed his country's Tehran embassy in 2011 after banking sanctions were announced, forcing its closure - were being repaired but it was an evolving process. (AFP)

Freedom House Called Tajikistan the Authoritarian State

DUSHANBE - International non-governmental organization Freedom House has once again rated Tajikistan to the state with authoritarian regime control. The new Freedom House report on the development of democracy in the 29 states of the former socialist camp in Europe and Central Asia (Nations in Transit-2015) Tajikistan, along with six CIS countries, is in the list of countries with authoritarian regime control. The most authoritarian in the list are Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, both scored by 6.93 points, and took 28th and 29th places. Further below there are Azer-

baijan (6.75), Belarus (6.71), Kazakhstan (6.61) and Russia (6.46). Tajikistan, gaining 6.39 points, and locates on the 23rd place in the list of countries of the former socialist camp. Meanwhile, Kyrgyzstan (5.93), Armenia (5.36) and Kosovo (5.14) are attributed to the countries with semi-authoritarian regime control. Moldova, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, Georgia and Albania are in the list of countries with the hybrid control mode. Montenegro, Serbia, Romania, Croatia, Bulgaria and Hungary are settled on the list of semi-democratic states. (Asia Plus)

Pakistan's Clashes Kill Senior Army Officer, 6 Militants

ISLAMABAD - A senior officer of Pakistani army and a soldier as well as six militants were killed in a clash in the restive North Waziristan tribal region on Monday, the military said. Backed by fighter jets, Pakistani ground troops have been fighting the Taliban militants in the rugged mountainous region near the Afghan border. The security forces have cleared most of the areas of the Tehrik-e-Taliban, remnants of al-Qaida, the Haqqani Network and other local and foreign militants. The militants have fled to the mountains to avoid aerial bombing. The

ground forces are now chasing them in Shawal Mountains in North Waziristan. "During an exchange of fire with security forces 6 terrorists were killed in Shawal today. An officer Lt. Col. Faisal Malik and a soldier also embraced 'shahadat' (martyrdom) in exchange of fire," an army statement said. The Pakistan Air Force has intensified bombing on the hideouts of the militants in the mountains in recent days and killed nearly 200 militants in a week. The army says that around 3,000 militants have been killed since the major operation has been launched in June last year. (Xinhua)

China Reaffirms non-Acceptance of Arbitration on S. China Sea: FM

BEIJING - China on Monday reiterated that it will not accept nor participate in the arbitration proceedings unilaterally initiated by the Philippines. China's position stands on a solid international legal base and will not change, said Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying in a press release. The Philippines filed its arbitration case at the Hague in early 2013. The South China Sea Arbitration Tribunal Established at the request of the Philippines concluded the hearing on Jurisdiction and Admissibility on July 13 and has recently released a transcript of the hearing. The Arbitration Tribunal has decided to provide China with the opportunity

to comment in writing, by Monday (August 17, 2015), on anything said during this Hearing on Jurisdiction and Admissibility. Hua said China has made clear its position in the "Position Paper of the Government of the People's Republic of China on the Matter of Jurisdiction in the South China Sea Arbitration Initiated by the Republic of the Philippines" dated December 7, 2014, which also declared that the Arbitration Tribunal does not have jurisdiction over this case. She said there has been a long-standing agreement between China and the Philippines on resolving their disputes in the South China Sea through friendly consultations and negotiations. (Xinhua)

Vietnam's Parliament Chair to Visit U.S.



HANOI - Vietnam's National Assembly (NA) chairman Nguyen Sinh Hung will pay a visit to the United States, said a press release by the NA Committee on Foreign Affairs on Monday. Hung will lead a NA delegation to attend the 4th World Conference of Speakers of Parliament held in New York

during his U. S. tour running from Aug. 31 to Sept. 9, Vietnam's state-run news agency VNA quoted the press release as saying on Monday. The 4th World Conference of Speakers of Parliament will be held at United Nations headquarters from Aug. 31 to Sept. 2. (Xinhua)